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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2008

In Today's Papers

Cheney Comes to Turkey
All papers report that U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney will arrive in Ankara today. Mainstream Sabah reports that Cheney will meet with President Gul, Prime Minister Erdogan and Chief of General Staff General Buyukanit in Ankara; then he will continue on to Istanbul for a private visit. Mainstream Hurriyet writes in "Today Cheney is in Ankara," that he will have three demands, "Turkish combat troops in Afghanistan's Helmand region," and "a similar approach Turkey took with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani be applied to relations with northern Iraqi Administration President Massoud Barzani," and "support for U.N. sanctions against Iran due to their nuclear activities." In addition, Hurriyet notes, Cheney will "emphasize his discomfort with Turkey's natural gas agreement with Iran." Mainstream Milliyet reminds that during his previous visit to Turkey six years ago, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit did not allow Cheney to meet with the Chief of General Staff, who at that time was General Kivrikoglu.

Islamist-oriented Zaman writes, "Cheney comes to Ankara again six years after his last visit," and that "Cheney is the fourth and most important high level U.S. visitor to Ankara since the middle of February." Zaman writes, "Cheney is expected to discuss the fight against the PKK, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, NATO and missile defense," in addition, Cheney will "express the Bush Administration's discomfort with Turkey's plans for an energy agreement with Iran." Zaman columnist Mehmet Yilmaz writes in "Will Our Soldiers Fight the Taliban in a War That Resembles Korea," that "one year after Cheney visited Turkey in 2002, the U.S. invaded Iraq, which the Turkish public was against. During this visit, Cheney will ask for more combat troops against the Taliban, but also there is the Iran topic. To what extent will Turkey's opposition to this new global manifest be effective?" In "Cheney is On the Road to Ankara," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak calls Cheney "full of surprises," and recalled that "the last time he was here he told the president, the prime minister, and the TGS Chief, 'there will be no invasion into Iraq' and then the U.S. invaded Iraq the next year." Leftist Taraf

writes in "Cheney Says 'Bitter Concessions Are Necessary for Peace,'" that Cheney told Palestinian leader Abbas that "both sides must give concessions," and the paper notes, "tomorrow he will discuss bargaining in Ankara about the PKK, troops for Afghanistan, and missile defense." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet writes, "Cheney Is Coming for Soldiers," and notes "the government can deliver their decision to him," after TGS Chief General Buyukanit has already stated, "Soldiers will not be sent to Afghanistan to fight," but Foreign Minister Babacan, "last week made statements that left the door open to the issue." Liberal Radikal writes in "Cheney Insisted on Meeting with Buyukanit," that "he is likely to ask for more troops in Afghanistan before the upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest," and that "Ankara turned down Iranian President Ahmedinejad's request for a visit due to 'heavy traffic' and told Ahmedinejad he could come to Turkey in April."

Editorial Opinion on VPOTUS Visit

"Cheney's Visit"
Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (3/24): "While Turkey is embroiled in its own domestic issues, Vice President Cheney is visiting Ankara as part of an extended Middle East tour. The missile shield project will be one of the main issues on Cheney's agenda. Secretary Gates clearly stated there are three pillars in the missile shield project: the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey. There have been some secret meetings regarding the missile shield, and the results are likely to be disclosed during the upcoming NATO summit. Cheney will also discuss the fight against the PKK and relations with the northern Iraqi regional Kurdish administration. In addition, energy issues, the Middle East peace process, Afghanistan, and the U.S.'s efforts to isolate Iran and Syria will

also be discussed. In other words, Cheney has a very busy agenda. However, given the intensity of internal debates, speculations and conspiracies, Turkey is not in the right mood to cope with such a busy international agenda."

"Cheney's Visit Will Reveal Our Differences"
Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet (3/21): "We can't tell how Turkey's internal developments will evolve, but we know Vice President Cheney's visit is one of the most important developments this week. However, it is unlikely that this visit will yield a surprising outcome. Cheney's agenda is very clear. He is here to discuss Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and missile defense. Turkey differs with Washington's opinion on each of these topics. Washington's priority is to increase the number of NATO combat troops in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Turkey, like many NATO members, does not want to become involved in clashes with the Taliban. Instead, Turkey and other NATO members support regional development projects and peacekeeping missions. Moreover, only Israel has expressed support for U.S. policy toward Iran; Ankara does not share the same opinion with Washington regarding Iran. In conclusion, an examination of each side's opinions on fundamental issues demonstrates the Cheney visit has the potential to reveal bilateral differences versus bilateral consensus."

Nevruz Festivities Turn Violent
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Yeni Safak, Bugun, Star, Radikal and others: Mainstream Sabah reports Sunday's Nevruz celebrations in Van, Yuksekova, and Siirt became violent when police tried to disperse crowds with tear gas. Police tried to disperse the crowds because they were demonstrating without permission from the municipalities. Crowds responded to the tear gas by throwing stones, which led to violent clashes between police and demonstrators. Two people died during these clashes with the security forces (one in Van and one in Yuksekova), 25 people were injured and 18 were taken under custody. Sabah says rallies in Ankara, Istanbul and Adana passed peacefully. Liberal Radikal reports that around 80,000 people attended the DTP's Nevruz celebrations in Istanbul. In Istanbul, DTP parliamentary members declared harsh messages against the government and the security forces. Slogans were chanted in honor of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports forty-nine people were

taken into custody in connection with Nevruz violence, including five Italian citizens.

Ergenekon Investigation
All papers report Cumhuriyet Chief Editor Ilhan Selcuk, former Istanbul University Rector Kemal Alemdaroglu, and Labor Party Chairman Dogu Perincek were detained on Friday in connection with the Ergenekon investigation. Selcuk and Alemdaroglu were released on Sunday. However, Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports police found plans for an attack against Court of Appeals in Labor Party Chairman Dogu Perincek's computer, so he remains in custody. Anadolu Agency reports Monday Perincek was transferred to the court on charges of being a high-level leader of the Ergenekon terrorist organization who was holding confidential documents about the state. Weekend papers carried reactions to the detentions. Cumhuriyet announced that the midnight detention could be compared only to practices during political coups. Mainstream Vatan reports the prosecutor accused Ilhan Selcuk of acting as the intellectual leader of Ergenekon network. Mainstream Milliyet gives front-page coverage to the message issued by Ilhan Selcuk after 15 hours of police interrogation, "there is a dangerous process of polarization in Turkey and the PM has to undertake steps to defuse tensions."

PM Erdogan Criticizes Baykal and the Media
During a party address in Aegean province Manisa, Prime Minister Erdogan blamed opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal for creating a

tension-filled atmosphere in the country. In a call for national unity, the prime minister said his party has nothing to do with the deep state, but some others do.

PM Erdogan called on the media to act responsibly for defusing the tension and read a verse from Koran to criticize media for not acting objectively. Leftist nationalist Cumhuriyet and mainstream Milliyet characterized this approach as warning for the media.

Operation against PJAK by Iran
Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, and Zaman: Papers cite a PUK website report and an AP report which carry Kurdish authorities' claims that Iranian military shelled PJAK terrorist camps on Sunday in Marado, Razda, and Dolakoka, which are in the Qandil region of northern Iraq.

Belgium and Germany Arrests PKK Members
Zaman, Cumhuriyet and others: Belgian Security officials announced yesterday that they arrested Mehmet Sahin, a member of the PKK who is sought by Turkish security forces and under an Interpol red bulletin alert.

Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that a German Court stated PKK terrorists harmed German institutions. Thus, the German Court sentenced PKK members Vehbi Azak, Halat Kesbir, Ali Seven, Bozan Ates, Ali Kiran, Hasan Adir and Sait Hasso to prison for two years and two months.

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

The CHP will carry the Ergenekon issue to parliament's agenda.

DSP leader Zeki Sezer calls the AKP's attempts to amend the constitution in order to avert their party's closure as "a coup attempt."

PM Spokesman Akif Beki issued a written statement rejecting reports that PM Erdogan met with the prosecutor who is in charge of the Ergenekon investigation.

PM Erdogan will visit Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Bulgaria on March 24-28.

Turkey uses unmanned aircraft in operations against PKK in Sirnak.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warns supporters to stick to national unity despite the suit seeking the closure of the AKP.

16 DTP activists were arrested in Malatya in an operation against the PKK.

Two workers died in landslide at a construction site in Ordu.

International News

Cheney told Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that the U.S. will continue to work toward the long overdue goal of creating a Palestinian state.

India successfully tested a short range version of its most powerful nuclear capable missile.

Yousaf Raza Gilani, a former parliament speaker and aide to murdered opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, is nominated as the parliamentary majority's choice to be Pakistan's next prime minister.

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An increasing number of Iraqi detainees are refusing to leave detention centers despite being eligible for release. They want to complete studies they began behind bars, a US general says.

WILSON